

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

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CARNEGIE LIBRARY
500 National Avenue
Las Vegas
San Miguel County
New Mexico

HABS NM-210

INDEX TO BLACK AND WHITE PHOTOGRAPHS

James W. Rosenthal, photographer, May 2005

NM-210-1	Perspective view from the southeast
NM-210-2	South elevation

ADDENDUM TO:
CARNEGIE LIBRARY
500 National Avenue
Las Vegas
County
New Mexico

HABS NM-210
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WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20240-0001

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

Addendum to CARNEGIE LIBRARY

HABS No. NM-210

Location: 500 National Avenue, Las Vegas, San Miguel County, New Mexico.

The Carnegie Library is located within the Library Park Historic District and is included as a contributing structure in the "Historic Resources of Las Vegas, New Mexico" inventory for the National Register of Historic Places (1984).

Significance: The library was funded by a grant from Andrew Carnegie, and was one of the 1679 libraries constructed between 1886 and 1917 through Carnegie's program. Carnegie devoted some forty million dollars to his library project.¹ Las Vegas's library was designed by the firm Rapp and Rapp, and built in 1903. The building itself recalls Monticello with its dome resting on an octagonal drum, recessed portico entry, arched windows with sandstone details, and brick masonry work. Its neoclassicism is in keeping with the buildings facing the library park and in its immediate neighborhood.

History: Andrew Carnegie the immigrant is less remembered than Andrew Carnegie the steel industry magnate and philanthropist. Carnegie could fund his philanthropy with profits from the sale of the Carnegie Steel Company in 1901, yet the direction those efforts took came out of his own experience as a poor immigrant. He was self-taught, and was said to attribute his later success to what he learned from the books in a private library. Most libraries in the late nineteenth century were private collections or subscription; neither was an affordable option for many Americans. Carnegie promoted equal access to knowledge, thus to opportunity, through his libraries. Local communities could apply for grant funds to construct the libraries, but they had to match the grant by supplying a location and a percentage of the funds.² Las Vegas received \$10,000 from Carnegie; the building site - a square shaped park - had been set aside as early as 1882. Between 1887 and 1893 the Women's Christian Temperance Union, and from 1893 to 1903, the Reading Room Association pressed for the library. Las Vegas's library is the result of their efforts and Carnegie's largesse. It was one of just a few Carnegie libraries in the state of New Mexico, and one of just a few of the libraries funded by Carnegie nationwide that still serve as libraries today.³

¹Catherine C. Lavoie, "Central Library," Historic American Buildings Survey; Abigail Van Slyck, *Free to All: Carnegie Libraries and American Culture, 1890-1920* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995).

²Ibid.

³Information taken from the New Mexico State files and the National Register nominations.

Sources:

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Diana G. Stein, “Las Vegas Carnegie Public Library and Library Park,” New Mexico State Register of Cultural Properties, 1977.

Ellen Threinen, “Library Park Historic District,” Nomination, National Register of Historic Places, 1978.

Chris Wilson, “Nuestra Senora de Los Dolores de Las Vegas (City of Los Vegas),” Nomination, National Register of Historic Places, 1984.